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Intelligence gathering eyed

INDIANAPOLIS — As the George W. Bush administration drew to a close Tuesday, Indiana lawmakers were dealing with some unfinished business from the post-9/11 era and its enhanced security measures.

A state Senate committee passed a bill that would rephrase Indiana law to mirror federal law concerning law enforcement's gathering of criminal intelligence. That would include tips, data and suspicions about possible crimes afoot and individuals participating in them.

Senate Bill 251 deals specifically with the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center, a high-tech room of computers and intelligence analysts in the basement of the state government complex in Downtown Indianapolis. The center reviews crime tips coming in from around the state and decides if they merit forwarding to the FBI, federal authorities or police agencies statewide.

Opened in 2006 as a division of the state Department of Homeland Security, the Indiana fusion center is intended to help law enforcers "connect the dots" by forming conclusions about possible criminal activity.

We are finally bringing down all these impairments we had to doing good intelligence," Sen. Thomas Wyss said. As chairman of the Senate Transportation, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs Committee, Wyss, R-Fort Wayne, authored Senate Bill 251, which passed the committee 7-0 on Tuesday.

The fusion center's executive director, Maj. Monte McKee, testified the center receives tips from local police or the general public about suspicious activity that a team of analysts reviews.

"Once we have something that really meets that threshold, then we share that data with national security authorities, which would be the FBI and the local police agencies to say, 'There's been some suspicious activity reported, we've looked at it, we've analyzed it, we feel it meets the threshold of intelligence,'" McKee said.

That, in turn, could launch a formal investigation by the appropriate department, be it the FBI, Indiana State Police or some other agency.

McKee emphasized that the fusion center is a resource for local law enforcement, but does not conduct crime investigations or surveillance itself.

"We don't go out and spy on people," he said.

The upshot of Wyss' legislation is that it raises the legal burden of proof — making it more restrictive — for the fusion center to be able to pass along information. Current law calls for a nebulous "if-grounds-exist" standard, whereas Wyss' bill would make that threshold a "reasonable suspicion" standard.

"The federal law is a newer body of law, and it's a more substantive body of law. We're required to comply with both," McKee said.

No one testified against the bill Tuesday or raised civil liberties concerns about it. Two phone messages seeking comment about the bill were left with the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana.

Having passed in committee, Senate Bill 251 now advances to the full Senate. If it passes there, it would go to the House.

When the Indiana fusion center opened in 2006, then-U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff visited and toured the facility. In the Obama administration, Chertoff's designated replacement as U.S. homeland security secretary is Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano.

McKee said the early indication he is getting is that the federal department under the new administration would have continued emphasis on state fusion centers in sifting through criminal intelligence.

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TribStar.com



Terre Haute firefighters recognized for service

By Brian M. Boyce
The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE January 20, 2009 10:55 pm

— For more than two centuries, American firefighters have answered the call of duty be it with bucket brigades, steam engines or computers.

And according to Indiana State Fire Marshal James Greeson, the one thing that hasn't changed is the people.

"The dedication I witnessed during those flood periods by the fire departments and law enforcement was remarkable," he said during his speech Tuesday evening in reference to the statewide floods this past June.

Greeson served as guest speaker for the Terre Haute Fire Department Commendation Awards banquet sponsored by First Financial Bank in Indiana State University's Student Union's Dede I and II.

Beginning his work in fire service at the Indianapolis Fire Department in 1970, Greeson retired from that department before accepting his new position with the state last year.

But the history of fire departments extends back 230 years, he said, noting its origins with Founding Father Benjamin Franklin.

From bucket brigades all the way to modern 911 systems, Greeson recalled his own early experiences at the Indianapolis department, mentored by World War II veterans, members of what he and others have termed "the greatest generation."

Fire Chief Jeff Fisher saluted the Terre Haute department, "I toast you," he said, raising his glass. "To the best fire department in the state."

Fisher noted in his speech that he hoped to "not top that this year," in reference to a dorm fire at ISU on the 2008 awards night, which cut the ceremonies short.

Fisher reiterated other memorable moments from 2008, his first year as chief, citing the department's taking over of fire protection at Terre Haute International Airport-Hulman Field, the June floods, the fire at presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's Terre Haute headquarters, the visit by President Bill Clinton, visits by then-Sen. Barack Obama and a fire at International Paper.

"This is not just an award," he said of Tuesday evening's presentation winners. "It's recognition by your fellow firefighters, your brothers and sisters."

Mayor Duke Bennett also noted the "blessing" of attending the dinner that concludes his first year in office.

Bennett mentioned his personal experience with the department as his own home caught fire earlier in the year, joking that one of the firefighters asked if he was going to show up at all the fires to check up on them.

“We’re very proud of you,” he said.

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Cause of trailer fire under investigation

Monday, January 19, 2009

By IVY JACKSON, *Times Staff Reporter*

COALMONT -- Officials are investigating the cause of a trailer fire that displaced a family.

Shortly before 3 a.m., Sunday, members of the Lewis Volunteer Fire Department, with backup assistance from Jasonville and Wright Township volunteer fire departments, were dispatched to a trailer fire at 6870 W. Nesbit St., Coalmont.

"We were able to quickly contain the fire within the trailer itself," Lewis Fire Chief Bryan Husband told The Brazil Times Monday.

"Although we have a standing structure, it was a total loss."

Husband said resident Crystal Curnett, her two children and another family member were not home during the fire and the American Red Cross has been contacted to help the family.

Although believed to have been accidental, Husband said the Indiana Department of Homeland Security Division of Fire and Building Safety has been contacted to help determine the cause the fire.

A fire marshal is expected to arrive sometime this week.

I-70 accident sends three to hospital

Meanwhile, icy road conditions caused a single vehicle accident on Interstate-70 that sent three people to St. Vincent Clay Hospital and slowed traffic.

Members of Jackson and Posey Township volunteer fire departments, Clay County Search and Rescue and the Clay County Sheriff's Department was dispatched to the accident involving a passenger car in the eastbound lane of I-70, near the 20-mile marker.

According to officials at the scene, three unidentified people from Indianapolis sustained injuries during the accident and were transported by TransCare to St. Vincent Clay Hospital.

They were treated for what was described by officials as "minor injuries" and later released.

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Kinnett fire remains under investigation

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

By Nick Schneider, Assistant Editor

Local and state fire officials took an initial look Tuesday morning at the charred rubble left behind in the fire at Kinnett Auto Sale and Rentals in Linton on Monday night.

Linton Fire Chief Gary Tannehill said a field investigator from the Indiana State Fire Marshal's office visited the fire scene and made an initial assessment. He said fire officials talked with owner Larry Kinnett and it was agreed they would hold off on actually sifting through the rubble to make a cause determination until after the insurance adjuster has a chance to look at the site.

Tannehill said it might take the adjuster 24 to 48 hours to arrive in town and to look over the fire remains.

"We are just at a standstill in the investigation part of it," Tannehill said in pointing out that the fire, police and insurance companies want be on the same page in the probe.

The fire chief stressed that it was standard for the fire marshal's office to be called in for any commercial-type fire and there has been nothing found that would suggest foul play.

"It doesn't appear to be anything out of the way or unusual," he said.

Tannehill said he believes the fire may have started between two roofs over the back part of the car lot's mechanic shop.

"It was probably burning while they (Kinnett and employees) were there and they didn't know it," he said Tuesday afternoon.

Kinnett told the Greene County Daily World that he and other employees had left the building after closing at 6 p.m. on Monday. About 30 minutes later he got a telephone call that the building was on fire.

The fire to the Linton business, located on State Road 54 West, was reported at 6:20 p.m.

Kinnett, who founded the company in 1964, called the fire a "total loss" as far as the building, showroom and office was concerned. Three showroom vehicles, several others and a tractor in the mechanic's shop and a couple parked cars along the side of the building were destroyed by the intense heat of the blaze.

The fire chief said his department was called back to the scene about 3 a.m. and again at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday to extinguish some minor rekindling of the fire.

Tannehill said firefighting conditions were a challenge with the temperature in the 15 to 20 degree range most of Monday evening. Several hoses were reported to have froze up because of the frigid conditions. Also, a Jasonville firefighter sustained a minor ankle injury when he fell on ice that had accumulated at the scene from the fire hoses. He was transported to Greene County General Hospital for treatment.

No other injuries were sustained.

Tannehill credited the great work done by members of his department along with the mutual aid received from personnel with fire departments in Jasonville, Bloomfield, Wright Township, and Dugger.

Wright Township also provided backup manpower to the Linton and Jasonville departments while they were on the fire scene.

Tannehill pointed out that the aerial trucks provided by Jasonville and Bloomfield were especially helpful in helping to contain the fire and keep it from spreading to Bender Lumber Company, located immediately to the west as well as other residential homes in the surrounding area.

"We were able to save the other buildings and Bender Lumber thanks to the Bloomfield and Jasonville aerial trucks," Tannehill stated. "That really helped us save that building.

"It was kind of tough at the scene because of the cold weather, but everybody did a good job."

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Story URL: <http://gcdailyworld.com/story/1494870.html>

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Indiana House Fire Claims Man

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Story by [theindychannel.com](#)

CARMEL, Ind. --

An elderly man was killed Saturday morning in a fire at his Carmel home.

Neighbors reported seeing smoke coming from a home in the 3700 block of West 98th Street, at about 9:30 a.m.

Firefighters broke down the door when they arrived. Inside, they found the body of Truman Moyer, 83.

Moyer was taken to St. Vincent Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Firefighters said they didn't find any working smoke detectors in the house. The fire's cause was under investigation.

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FEMA Awards Nearly 7 Million to Columbus Regional Hospital



CRH has recieved 7 million from FEMA for repairs.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has released \$6.93 million to help fund repairs to the Columbus Regional Hospital.

During the June flood the entire basement of the hospital, containing much of the medical and lab equipment was filled floor to ceiling with contaminated water, mud and silt. In addition, the first floor area sustained heavy damage from standing contaminated water and mud.

With additional funding still under review, the 7 million dollar amount is for three emergency protective measure projects undertaken in the basement and on the first floor. The work was primarily the removal of debris, and to dry, dehumidify and clean contaminated areas. The debris included mud, silt, construction and demolition materials, along with hazardous waste.

While the hospital carried insurance for the disaster, the insurance did not cover all the damage.

The total cost for the three projects is \$8,686,795. FEMA's share for two of the projects was 75% for a total of \$4,438,417.

For the third project, FEMA funded \$2,492,016 which is 90% of that project's cost. Total federal share for the three projects amounts to \$6,930,433.

Last Updated: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 2:00:18 PM

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Post-Tribune

Grant to aid flood clean-up work

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/1388477,gaflood.article>)

January 21, 2009

By John Byrne

Post-Tribune staff writer

INDIANAPOLIS -- Northwest Indiana workers whose jobs were affected by September floods will get first crack at the region's share of a federal grant to subsidize clean-up work.

The state Department of Workforce Development announced Tuesday that 12 Indiana counties, including Lake, Porter and LaPorte, will share a \$720,000 National Emergency Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The funds will be used to hire people to temporary jobs to complete clean-up and repair projects still unfinished since torrential rains swept through the region in mid-September, forcing the Little Calumet River and other waterways over their banks and into neighborhoods in Gary, Munster, Chesterton and elsewhere.

The Department of Workforce Development will work with local communities to identify projects that qualify.

The grants might be used to hire people to assist parks departments in clean-up, repair drainage ditches or highway culverts, salvage public records or distribute donated items, Workforce Development spokesman Marc Lotter said.

The grant cannot be used to reimburse agencies for storm-related work which has already taken place.

"This will be to hire people for work that still has to be performed," Lotter said. "And there will be hiring criteria to give preference to qualified people whose jobs were affected by the storms."

Once local WorkOne representatives run out of qualified applicants directly affected by the disaster, they will move onto other qualified applicants who live in the area, Lotter said.

The Department of Workforce Development will announce how people can apply for the jobs after the projects are identified, Lotter said.

Contact John Byrne at (317) 631-7400 or jbyrne@post-trib.com. Comment on this story at www.post-trib.com

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